

July 13, 2010

To the DCPS Community,

Today we announced preliminary results from our local test of student proficiency, the 2010 District of Columbia Comprehensive Assessment System (DC CAS).

DCPS secondary school students showed significant progress on both math and reading scores for a third consecutive year and test scores have dramatically improved overall across all measurable levels over the last three years of reforms.

In addition to solid increases in the numbers of students achieving grade-level proficiency over the past three years, the percentage of DCPS students scoring advanced has nearly doubled at both the elementary and secondary levels. During the same time period, the percentages of students scoring below basic have decreased.

Three years ago, we were in a place in which our school system was not known for student achievement growth or significant progress. Now, students' progress is undeniable, student achievement three-year growth is on an upward trajectory, and I believe we've built a solid foundation for an excellent school system moving forward.

We use DC CAS results not only to measure progress but also to identify areas that need more attention, so I wanted to share a few highlights with you today.

Preliminary Reading and Math Proficiency Rates

On the 2010 DC CAS, District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS):

- 44.4% of elementary students in reading, down 4.4% from 2009
- 43.4% of elementary students in math, down 4.6% from 2009
- 43.3% of secondary students in reading, up 3.2% from 2009
- 43.7% of secondary students in math, up 4.1% from 2009

Significant Progress at the Secondary Level

The 2010 CAS results demonstrate significant growth at the secondary level. This growth is even more encouraging when considered in the context of the past three years. Each year, secondary students have improved. Secondary students have improved an average of 4.5% points in reading and 5.6% points in math each year. This kind of steady, consistent growth indicates that reforms at the secondary level are taking hold and provide a solid foundation on which to build.

Three-year Growth and Trends

- *Growth in Achievement:* DCPS students are reaching higher levels of proficiency in both reading and math in both elementary and secondary schools.
- *Gains Across Subgroups:* Virtually every subgroup is performing at a higher level in 2010 than in 2007. In fact, many groups have experienced double-digit growth in proficiency levels since 2007. At the secondary level, black students and students in low-income homes have both increased by double-digits in both reading and math since 2007.

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- *More Students are Advanced and Fewer Students are Below Basic:* To reform an entire school system, this is particularly important. Student achievement cannot be dramatically improved if significant numbers of students continue to score at basic and below basic levels.

As we use the data to inform our decisions across the system, we look at multiple measures of performance, and the DC CAS is just one measure we use. Always using the data to improve, we are also considering progress that is happening on many fronts.

- The National Assessment of Educational Progress/Trial Urban District Assessment (NAEP/TUDA) shows DCPS was the only district among major urban school districts to show statistically significant reading gains at both the fourth and eighth grade levels, and DCPS students are outpacing the country in math growth, moving forward as the rest of the country remains static.
- More students are graduating than in prior years. The graduation rate increased to 72 percent for students graduating in 2009. More than half of DCPS high schools increased their graduation rates, with 10 out of 16 schools increasing at least 3 percent.
- After decades of steep decline, enrollment has stabilized. This year every eligible DC public school attracted applicants for the annual K-12 Out-of-Boundary, preschool, and pre-Kindergarten (pre-K) lotteries. Fourteen schools had waitlists for the first time. Ultimately, a record high of 5,219 families, representing an increase of 50 percent over 2009, expressed interest in DCPS programs located in all eight wards.

Why *All* of These Results Are Useful

The results for middle and high school students are encouraging, while scores across elementary schools reflect a need to redouble efforts to ensure that instruction is preparing students to achieve.

In many schools, only minor adjustments are necessary, while in others we will implement more aggressive changes. I am excited that with the new teachers' contract we will have even more tools to use to keep the progress going, and we will. But most importantly, we will learn from the many schools that are succeeding and share those best practices across schools so that all students can succeed.

I remain aware of all the work that lies ahead, and I am also confident that we can do it together. I continue to be grateful for your hard work and commitment to the children of the District of Columbia Public Schools.

Sincerely,

Michelle Rhee